Government in terming our Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's recent meeting with the reverent Dalai Lama as Delhi's interference in China's internal affairs; and

(b) whether there has been any Chinese reaction to the deep resentment expressed by our Ministry of External Affairs spokesman on this statement of China?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) In keeping with past practice, His Holiness the Dalai Lama paid a courtesy call on PM on October 15, 1998. Government through the spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs stated on October 23, 1998 that the Chinese reaction was unjustified and pointed out that His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been received, in his capacity as a revered spiritual and religious personage, by successive Indian Prime Ministers. Government feels that no further action need be taken in this matter.

(b) No, Sir.

NRI Parliamentarians Conference

2090. SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI:
SHRI PARAG CHALIHA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a convention of NRI parliamentarians, etc. was held in New Delhi, recently;

(b) if so, the decisions/resolutions adopted therein; and

(c) the stand of Government towards demand of the Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) The Government is not aware of any convention of NRI Parliamentarians' held in New Delhi recently. The Government is, however, aware that the first international PIO (People of Indian Origin) Parliamentarians' Conference was held in New Delhi from November 28-29, 1998 under the aegis of Antar-Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad.

(b) The conference reportedly adopted a number of recommendations including the setting up of a permanent Association of Parliamentarians of Indian Origin; the setting up of an university for the children of People of Indian Origin; the constitution of a Department in the Ministry of External Affairs to provide assistance to People of Indian Origin; the exchange of students between India and countries with People of Indian Origin; and widening the areas of cooperation between India and these countries.

(c) Government is sensitive to the special needs of persons of Indian origin living abroad. To this end, Government will continue to provide opportunities to such persons so that their cultural, educational and commercial ties with India are nurtured and strengthened.

Foreign Missions

2091. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of foreign missions maintained by his Ministry broken down into embassies, legations, consulates and vice-consulates;

(b) the number of foreign service officers of different categories to serve these offices; and

(c) the nature of training and refresher courses organised for these personnel?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) The total number of missions abroad maintained by the Ministry of External Affairs is 157 comprising: (i) Embassies-83 (ii) High Commissions-29 (iii) Consulates-32 (iv) Others-13 (Total 157).

(b) The grade-wise number of Indian Foreign Service (IFS) Officers to serve these offices is as follows (i) Grade I of IFS -26 (ii) Grade II of IFS-34 (iii) Grade III of IFS-166 (iv) Grade IV of IFS-136 (v) Jr. Admn. Grade & Senior Scale of IFS-183 (vi) Junior Scale (including probationers)-42 (Total 587). The above figures include both officers at Missions abroad and those at Headquarters.

(c) Training and Conduct of refresher courses for IFS personnel is undertaken by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). For IFS Probationers, and 11-month intensive training